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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH SOCIALIST UNION OF POPULAR  
FORCES PARTY LEADER

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[1](#)B. RABAT 00617

Classified By: A/Polcouns Cynthia Kierscht for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: The Ambassador met April 3 with for an hour with Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) party leader and Minister of Territory Development, Water, and Environment Mohamed El Yazghi at the recently completed USFP party headquarters in Rabat. The Ambassador was accompanied by Poloff (notetaker), while El Yazghi hosted the Ambassador alone. This is the second in a round of calls the Ambassador is making on political party leaders to discuss party proposals for a Western Sahara autonomy plan, the impact of the recently passed political party law, and party plans for the 2007 legislative elections. Discussing the USFP's joint autonomy proposal done in conjunction with the Istiqlal Party and the Socialism and Progress Party, El Yazghi explained that this is the "first phase" of the process and a "grand reform" like this, that will completely change the structures of the state, will take time. He also explained that USFP believes this could be the last chance to solve this problem, rhetorically asking, "what do you do after this?" El Yazghi also asked the Ambassador that the U.S., because of its relationship with Algeria, encourage Algeria to help solve the Western Sahara issue. On the recently passed political party law, El Yazghi believed this is "a very good thing," adding that USFP has recently adopted measures within the party to comply with the law. According to El Yazghi, the 2007 legislative elections are on the minds of the USFP and the party has been preparing internally following the last party congress in June 2005. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

Autonomy Plan: USFP Supports The King's Efforts  
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[1](#)2. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's question, El Yazghi explained that the USFP, in conjunction with the Istiqlal Party (PI) and the Socialism and Progress Party (PPS), submitted a joint memorandum on autonomy to the Palace in accordance with the April 1, 2006 deadline. El Yazghi, however, was quick to point out that this is merely the "first phase" of the process, because in the end all the structures of the state will change, adding a "grand reform" like this will take time. He noted that the USFP joint proposal on autonomy supported principles King Mohamed VI has laid out for the territory, but that the proposal was not heavy on details. On this note, El Yazghi assured the

Ambassador that when the time is right for details, USFP will be there to provide them. Commenting on the likelihood of a final solution to the Western Sahara, El Yazghi explained that the USFP assesses this could be "perhaps" the last chance for the international community to solve this issue. Asking rhetorically, "what do you do after this?" he pointed out that even after years of hard work the UN has not been able to reach a solution.

13. (C) Commenting on the economic challenges that face the Western Sahara, El Yazghi stressed that the GOM has and continues to make efforts to improve the economic situation by building schools, airports, roads, and other infrastructure. The government is providing the base that will allow development, he said. Noting that the territory's most profitable sector was "from the sea," El Yazghi underscored that there is economic potential for the Western Sahara. This area is "special" because of its location near the Atlantic ocean and rich soil, and, as a result of the recent rains, many parts of the Western Sahara are lush. In his view, this region has particular potential in agriculture, especially as technologies quickly evolve, explained El Yazghi. He made special reference to the small wind energy station located in Tan Tan, highlighting that the local desalinization plant is powered by the wind energy station. El Yazghi acknowledged that Morocco is a country with modest means, i.e. no proven oil reserves, and is effective with the resources it has, but if oil were discovered tomorrow Morocco would welcome this possibility.

14. (C) El Yazghi also used this meeting with the Ambassador as an opportunity to deliver a point on the Western Sahara. Noting the close relationship between the U.S. and Morocco, he acknowledged the U.S. relationship with Algeria, and asked

that the U.S. encourage Algeria to help resolve the issue of the Western Sahara. El Yazghi underscored that it is in both the interest of Algeria and Morocco to have a final solution, and it is unfortunate that this issue has impeded progress on several fronts in the region, particularly among the Maghreb countries. The Ambassador agreed, and stressed that the U.S. supports a negotiated solution that involves all parties. El Yazghi explained, "Morocco will never accept independence," adding that a solution that included independence would be a "failure." Replying to the Ambassador's query about the closed border, El Yazghi explained that this problem exists because of Algeria; "the borders are closed from the Algerian side, not by Morocco." He said this is an example of the "absence of democracy" in Algeria because a country with democracy would not arbitrarily close its border. He argued that the main reason why Algeria will not open the border is that they are scared Algerians will visit Morocco and "see how we live." Further demonstrating the differences he sees between Morocco and Algeria, he noted that Algeria has spent 9 billion dollars purchasing arms from Russia, while at the same time Morocco has attract 9 billion dollars in investment. El Yazghi closed the discussion on the Western Sahara by saying, "the USFP supports the King's efforts because of the courage he has shown engaging this tough issue."

New Political Party Law: "A Very Good Thing"

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15. (C) According to El Yazghi, the recently passed political party law is "a very good thing" and is "absolutely going to change things." He said that Morocco cannot have democracy without strong political parties, and this new law will increase the transparency of political parties, thus making them stronger and more accountable entities. El Yazghi pointed out that the USFP adopted a decree March 30 within the USFP structure that assures USFP's conformity with the political party law. On the new 5 percent threshold, El Yazghi said there will undoubtedly be a regrouping of political parties, hinting that the USFP could benefit from this likely phenomenon by absorbing smaller political parties. He noted that USFP has already "integrated" members, a reference to the December 2005 absorption of the

Democratic Socialist Party (PSD), and the resulting acquisition of PSD's four lower house seats. El Yazghi also briefly discussed the USFP's preparations for a regional congress that will be held in Agadir April 14.

#### USFP Preparing For 2007 Elections

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16. (C) El Yazghi confirmed that the 2007 legislative are well on the minds of the USFP, and have been for some time. In fact, starting at the last USFP party congress, held in June 2005, the USFP began preparing for the 2007 elections, according to El Yazghi. The USFP, working with its Koutla, or national democratic bloc, partners (Istiqlal and PPS) is looking to herd together loosely linked political parties under a common theme, in an effort to produce a strong political force for 2007.

17. (C) While on the topic of the 2007 election, El Yazghi raised the recent International Republican Institute (IRI) poll that appeared in the March 18 issue of Moroccan French-language weekly Le Journal and expressed his concerns about its veracity and the resulting image this can produce. Despite expressing reservations about the validity of the poll results because he was not fully aware of how respondents were chosen, El Yazghi highlighted that the poll showed respondents believed that the USFP is the political party who can change things. El Yazghi, however, highlighted that as a result of this poll, Morocco may misconstrue the findings as implicit support by the U.S., and the Republican party in particular, for the Party for Justice and Development (PJD) to win the 2007 elections. After explaining that the poll was meant to be an internal IRI document and not published in the press, the Ambassador stressed that it is necessary to have well structured political parties that are able to meet the needs of its constituents.

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